

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**PERMITS IN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS**  
**MAY 21, 2018**  
**NRD-2018-0038**  
**1602 West Lynn Street**  
**Old West Austin Historic District**

Item # 46  
PAZ

**PROPOSAL**

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Modifications to the façade, including changes to the portico, roofline, and window configurations; construct additions and create a circular drive in the front.

**PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

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The applicant proposes to build out 50% of the existing attic space by raising the roof and constructing a line of gabled dormers across the front of the house. All windows in the house will be replaced with windows that meet Code, and many windows will be reconfigured to fit the proposed new interior layout of the house. The existing semi-circular front portico will be removed and replaced with a more centered, square portico. The applicant further proposes the construction of a circular driveway in the front of the house. A 1,200-square foot addition will be constructed on the side of the house, increasing the total square footage of the house from 4,000 square feet to 5,200 square feet. The existing 2-car garage and garage apartment will be enlarged to a 3-car garage.

**RESEARCH**

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The house was built in 1923, and was designed by the noted local architectural firm of Giesecke and Harris. The house has been the home of several prominent families in Austin, including two judges, one an associate justice on the Texas Supreme Court. George E. and Belle Sydnor Bryson built this house in 1923; its construction was featured in the building section of the American-Statesman. George Bryson was a partner of Malcolm Reed in the city's largest cotton-buying business. Bryson and his wife lived here until the late 1920s, when they moved to Houston. The Brysons were among the most socially important Austin families. Stories in the newspapers detail various parties and other social events peppered with the names of some of the wealthiest families in Austin, including the Reeds, the Rathers, and others.

After George Bryson and his family moved to Houston, the house was owned and occupied by Joe B. and Addie Knight, who lived here until the mid-1930s. Joe B. Knight was a rancher; the house was again the site of many social gatherings that were noted in the society pages of the newspaper. Charles G. Krueger and his wife, Nora, purchased the house from the Knights, when the Knights moved to Corpus Christi. Charles Krueger was a commissioner on the State Court of Criminal Appeals. He and his family lived here until around 1938. They then moved to the McClendon-Price House (a city landmark) on Pearl Street, before moving back to Bellville, Texas, where Charles Krueger became the Austin County judge.

Richard and Nora L. Critz bought the house around 1937, and lived here until Richard passed away in 1959. A native of Starkville, Mississippi, Richard Critz was an associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court in the 1930s and 1940s. As a young man, he moved with his family from Mississippi to Williamson County, where he attended school and studied law. He practiced law in Granger, Texas until 1910, when he became the Williamson County judge, serving until 1918, when he opened a law office in Taylor, Texas. After practicing law in Taylor for 10 years, he was appointed by Governor Dan Moody to serve on the Commission of Appeals to the Texas Supreme Court. In 1935, he was appointed by Governor James V. Allred to the Texas Supreme Court to fill a vacancy. He

served as an associate justice on the Texas Supreme Court until 1944, when he retired to return to private practice in Austin. He formed a law firm that had offices in the Littlefield Building, and later had his own solo practice in the Perry-Brooks Building at 8<sup>th</sup> and Brazos Streets. While on the Supreme Court, he was known for the clarity and logic of his legal opinions, and delivered several opinions and decisions that regulated the state's oil industry. After his death in 1959, the house was owned and occupied by later generations of attorneys.

### **STANDARDS FOR REVIEW**

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The house is contributing to the Old West Austin National Register Historic District, and qualifies as a historic landmark under the criteria for architecture and historical associations. The applicant's proposed modifications to the house would foreclose the opportunity for landmark designation, and would render the house non-contributing to the historic district.

Additions to contributing structures can be made in such a way to complement the historic character of the building and retain the building's status as contributing to the architectural character of the district. General design principles for additions and alterations to contributing buildings in historic districts discourage changes to the front façade of the building, locating additions to the rear of the building whenever possible, and prioritizing repair and rehabilitation of historic building fabric over replacement. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide further guidance to make compatible additions and alterations to contributing buildings:

*The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*

The proposed project changes the front of the house, creating a new roofline with a series of gabled dormers, reconfiguring the front entry and portico, and changing the fenestration patterns, in contravention of this standard.

*New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

The proposed addition is compatible with the scale and massing of the house, and uses compatible materials.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Initiate historic zoning on this house and evaluate alternatives to the current proposal that would maintain the historic character of the house to a much higher degree and retain the house as contributing to the historic district. Staff encourages the applicant to consider a rear addition to accommodate the additional space contemplated for the built-out attic necessitating the proposed row of dormers, and to retain the existing portico, fenestration pattern, and to rehabilitate the windows rather than replacing them to achieve energy efficiency for the house. Staff also recommends that the applicant reconsider the circular drive in front of the house.